

**Mr. Silva (Portugal) (spoke in Portuguese);**

English text provided by the delegation): It is with great pleasure that for the first time I address the Security Council on behalf of Portugal in this timely initiative of the Angolan presidency. I welcome the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General and of his Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region to support the stability, peace, security and development of the countries in the region. In that connection, we welcome the United Nations Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework 2016-2017. We acknowledge with satisfaction the establishment of a road map of priorities by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, as well as the six pillars of action selected, all corresponding to areas we recognize to be crucial for adequately tackling the most important challenges in the region.

Portugal, both nationally and as member of the European Union, has supported and will continue to support the efforts of the countries in the Great Lakes region in their processes of national reconciliation, democratic consolidation, social and economic sustainable development and the promotion of respect for human rights, in accordance with the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, agreed in Addis Ababa in 2013.

We have been following the situation in Burundi with particular attention and concern. We commend the efforts of the East African Community, the African Union and the United Nations to promote an inclusive dialogue. We believe that is the only valid path to avoid an escalation of the conflict and further deterioration of the human rights situation in the country.

The Arusha Agreement, which is still in force, is a good example of an African solution to an African problem. We hope that the current conflict will be solved through inclusive political dialogue. The deployment of 200 military experts and observers of the African Union to the field is an important positive step.

There has been progress on security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, progress in the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations has been slow, with the persistence of tension and the presence of armed groups in the country. In that context, we commend the recent agreement that enables joint operations of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo/United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) against the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda. It is therefore crucial to ensure strong support for MONUSCO and to promote its closer collaboration with the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We highlight the importance of the strategic dialogue between the United Nations and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with regard to the MONUSCO exit strategy, which, in our view, should be a gradual process based on progress on the ground.

It is urgent to ensure the inclusiveness and representativeness of the national political dialogue within the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Any changes in the constitutional framework that do not garner the necessary political consensus represent a risk factor for the country's stability, with potential negative repercussions for the entire continent.

The repeated violations of the ceasefire agreement and the tragic human rights situation in South Sudan are very concerning. All parties must commit with urgency to fulfilling the terms of the Peace Agreement and to establishing the planned transitional Government.

It is also urgent to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches those in need throughout the whole region. We therefore call for the unreserved cooperation of all States in the establishment of the conditions required for access so that we can lessen the suffering of refugees, internally displaced people and populations in urgent need of humanitarian aid.

Africa holds a special place in Portuguese foreign policy. Portugal is also firmly committed to effective multilateralism that is based on the primacy of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. Our motivation is to constantly be a solid partner in solidarity, both bilaterally and within the European Union. We shall continue along that path, in full respect for the principle of State ownership and while recognizing the specific responsibility and role of regional organizations.

We will continue to participate in the efforts being undertaken by the international community aimed at promoting dialogue with the countries of the region, notably through regional and subregional organizations, including the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community.

We will promote and support training initiatives on good governance, anti-corruption efforts, the equitable distribution of resources, the empowerment of women and the right to education. We stand ready to develop cooperation in the area of capacity-building, notably on the reform of the security and justice sectors. We will encourage private-sector and civil-society participation in the implementation of projects that promote peace and development.

I take this opportunity to commend the work of Angola in its presidency of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, in which it has promoted efforts for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the development of the region.

Aside from the great challenges in the Great Lakes region, there is great potential for development. Only peace and security can foster the basic conditions for development. Only peace can make it possible to avoid the exploitation of natural resources by warlords and rebel factions. Only good governance and solid institutions will enable transparency in the extractive industries and the implementation of policies to ensure that economic development translates into human development, tangible to all segments of the population. No one should be left behind.

The consolidation of a democratic culture requires stability. I do not mean stability at any price, but rather stability built on strict fulfilment of the constitutional order, the rule of law, transparency and free and fair electoral processes, as well as State institutions that safeguard the interests of the entire population.

In concluding, I reaffirm Portugal's commitment to collaborate with the countries of the Great Lakes region, in the wish that Nelson Mandela's dream of an Africa at peace with itself will become a reality.

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